

Gregory's festive masterstroke

KEITH Ryan, who became a father on Christmas Eve, believes John Gregory pulled off a masterstroke by giving the players Christmas Day off.

Rhino, whose girlfriend Sarah gave birth to baby Amy on Christmas Eve, said: "You never know what the manager is going to do next, he likes to keep everyone guessing. I think it was a good move, players respond better if they're happy and that showed in the performances."

Gregory said: "I knew I could trust the players and I was right. One of them even told his wife to take food off his Christmas dinner plate because he wanted to be right for the game."

The Blues had been expecting to train until Gregory told them on Christmas Eve to stay home with their families instead.

Gregory said: "We've got a lot of players with babies and it could've been counter-productive to have them in. I'm always willing to give the lads a pat on the back and rewards when they deserve them."

Instead, the players reported more than four hours before the Watford match on Boxing Day and had a light training session playing head tennis in the morning.

Meanwhile, Ryan joins the growing Dads Army at Adams Park. Keith Scott, Martin Taylor, Nicky Mohan, Dave Carroll, Steve McGavin and Michael Forsyth are already members.

● Wanderers have blamed the police's decision to make the Watford match all-ticket for the disappointing crowd of 8,090. The attendance was 348 lower than last season's league record set when the two sides last met.

Marketing manager Mark Austin



Proud: Keith Ryan became a dad on Christmas Eve

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said: "We were inundated with supporters phoning on the day wanting to come and it was painful having to turn them away. We could have had a capacity crowd if it wasn't all ticket."

Blues issued almost 8,700 tickets but 600 ticket holders failed to turn up on the day. On an average

matchday 400 season ticket holders fail to show up.

● Wanderers and Manchester United share the honour of having the best home record in England in the year just gone.

Both sides lost just one home league game. Blues' defeat came with a 4-1 reversal against Carlisle

while United came a cropper against Derby.

Blues boss John Gregory said: "It's phenomenal, a record to be proud of."

● Gregory, who has defenders Michael Forsyth, Paul McCarthy and Jason Cousins suspended for the next match against Wigan, and Steve Brown one booking away from a ban, has told his players to cut out the verbals.

He said: "We've had too many bookings for dissent and petulance. I can't afford to lose players through silly bookings."

Gregory could make a loan signing to cover for suspensions.

The Blues boss said: "Alan Beeton (knee injury) would have been the ideal one to come back in but he is going to be out for at least another month."

He added: "We've got a week without a game and I'm going to assess the staff. There's still a few snippets out there."

Gregory, who has spent his budget, already has Ipswich's David Kerslake on loan until after the Wigan game and he has not ruled out the possibility of extending it or getting him on a free.

● Jason Cousins got booked against Watford even though he was not playing. Referee Mike Pierce mistakenly entered Cousins' name into his notebook when he booked Jason Kavanagh for a challenge on Peter Kennedy.

● Northampton have re-arranged their league match against the Blues for Tuesday, February 10 (ko 7.45pm) at Sixfields Stadium.

● WWISC collected £320 for former goalkeeper Paul Hyde who is trying to raise £14,000 to send his autistic twins to America for treatment.